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U.S. Says an Ex-Officer Sold Secret Coding Data to Soviet

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., July 15 (UPI) — A former Army warrant officer who had access to top secret coding devices was arrested today on charges of supplying the Soviet Union with such vital secrets that he was awarded the rank of colonel in the Soviet Army.

Joseph George Helmich, 44 years old, who formerly served in the Army Signal Corps, was arrested by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and charged with selling top secret information about a sophisticated teletype coding machine to Soviet officials while he was stationed in Paris in 1963 and 1964. In addition to receiving \$131,000 from Soviet agents, the indictment said, Mr. Helmich was promised additional payments in exchange for more data.

Gary Betz, a United States Attorney, said that what Mr. Helmich supplied Soviet officials could have been enough for them to make a code machine of their own and decipher American intelligence messages in the Vietnam War.

Mr. Helmich, a native of Florida who is employed by the Beach Tile Company of Neptune Beach, said he had only \$14 when he was taken into custody at his parents' home on Jacksonville Beach, where he had been living with his wife and their child since moving there six weeks ago from Niagara Falls, N.Y.

Assigned to Paris Embassy

The four-count indictment charges that Mr. Helmich delivered classified, secret and top secret information and equipment to Soviet agents from January 1963 to last August, and that he received approximately \$131,000 from January 1963 to July 1964 from Soviet

agents in Paris, where he was a cryptocustodian assigned to the United States Embassy. Conviction on each count, one of conspiracy and three of espionage, carries a maximum penalty of life in prison.

Among the honors bestowed on Mr. Helmich by the Soviet Union, Mr. Betz said, was the rank of colonel.

Although the indictments covered a 17-year period from 1963 to 1980, Mr. Helmich served in the Army only from 1954 to 1966. The indictment did not spell out how he communicated with Soviet agents after he left the Army.

Lawrence Lawler, a special agent in charge of the F.B.I. office in Jacksonville, said it took as long as it did to bring the indictment because it was a complex case involving "bits and pieces of information put together in a gigantic mosaic."

Held on \$500,000 Bond

Mr. Helmich appeared in court unshaven, wearing blue slacks, a pin-striped shirt and black boots. United States Magistrate Howard Snyder set bond at \$500,000 pending Mr. Helmich's arraignment tomorrow. The magistrate declared the former serviceman indigent and appointed Peter Dearing, a former United States Attorney now in private practice, to represent Mr. Helmich.

In arguing for a high bond, Mr. Betz told the magistrate that Mr. Helmich had "funds put away for him outside the United States and means and methods for him to leave the country."

Mr. Helmich is the fourth person arrested on espionage charges in the last two months. On May 29, Second Lieut.

Christopher Cooke, 25, of Richmond, an Air Force missile-launching officer, was charged with 13 counts of making unauthorized visits to the Soviet Embassy in Washington and five counts of disclosing defense information.

On June 28, Marian Zacharski, a 29-year-old Polish businessman, and William Bell, 61, an employee of the Hughes Aircraft Company, were arrested in Playa del Rey, Calif., and charged with espionage. Both Mr. Zacharski and Mr. Bell, who was accused of selling classified documents on defense-related radar systems to the Polish Government, pleaded not guilty.

Gave Data to Soviet Agents

The indictment against Mr. Helmich accuses him of delivering the repair and maintenance instructions for the KL-7 Cryptosystem, described by Mr. Betz as a "cryptography system that encrypts teletype messages," technical details concerning the KL-7 rotors, and lists of settings for the system.

The indictment contends that Mr. Helmich got in touch with Soviet agents at the Soviet Embassy in Paris in January 1963 and delivered the manuals, technical details and lists to Soviet agents at the Soviet Trade Mission in Paris.

It also said that, while Mr. Helmich was in Paris, he "received instructions from agents of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in espionage trade-craft, including photography, secret writing and methods of clandestine communications."

In addition, he is accused of having concealed and given false information to American counterintelligence agents who interviewed him in 1964.



CHARGED WITH SPYING FOR MOSCOW: Joseph George Helmich, a former Army warrant officer, leaving court in Jacksonville, Fla. He was charged with selling top secret information on codes to Soviet agents. Page A12.

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